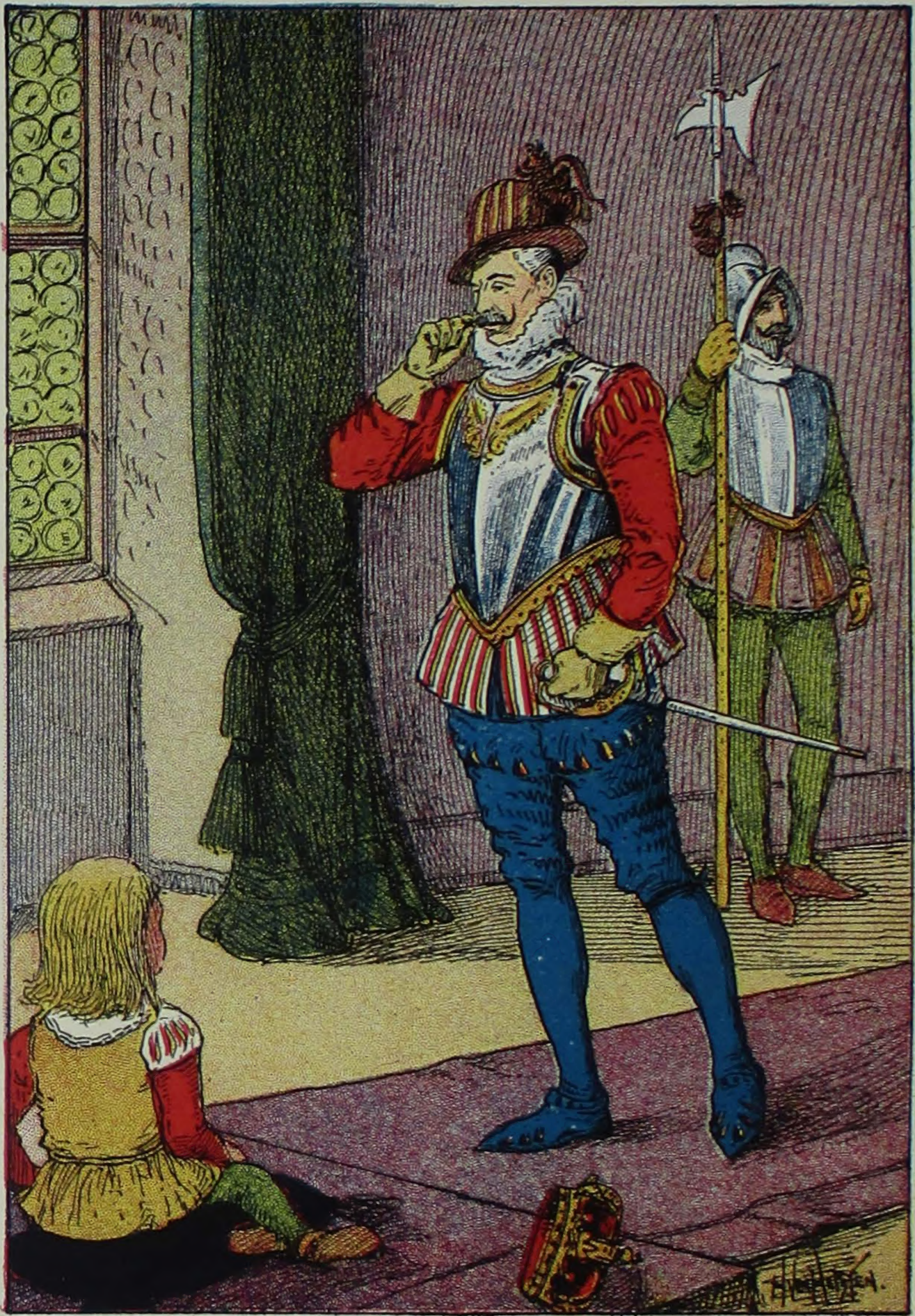


THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE



MULOCK

LITTLE LAME PRINCE.



"I SWEAR TO PERFORM MY DUTIES AS REGENT, AND TO TAKE CARE
OF HIS MAJESTY." [PAGE 11.]

THE
PLEASANT HOUR SERIES

THE
LITTLE LAME PRINCE

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THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE

CHAPTER I.

He was the most beautiful prince that ever was born.

Being a prince, people said this; and it was true. When he looked at the candle, his eyes had an earnest expression quite startling in a new-born baby. His nose was aquiline; his complexion was healthy; he was round, fat, and straight-limbed—a splendid baby.

His father and mother, King and Queen of Nomansland, and their subjects were proud and happy, having waited ten years for an heir. The only person not quite happy was the king's brother, who would have been king had the baby not been born, but his Majesty was very kind to him, and gave him a Dukedom as large as a country.

The Prince's christening was to be a grand affair; there were chosen for him four and twenty godfathers and godmothers, who each had to give him a name, and promise to do their utmost for him. When he came of age, he himself had to choose the name—and the godfather or godmother—that he liked best.

All was rejoicing and the rich gave dinners and feasts for the poor.

The only quiet place in the Palace was the room, which though the prince was six weeks old, his mother, the Queen, had not quitted. Nobody thought she was ill as she said nothing about it herself, but lay pale and placid, giving no trouble to anybody.

Christening day came at last and it was as lovely as the Prince himself. All the people in the Palace were beautifully dressed in the clothes which the Queen had given them.

By six in the morning all the royal household had dressed itself in its very best; and then the little Prince was dressed in his magnificent christening robe; which he did not like at all, but kicked and screamed like any common baby. When he had calmed down, they carried him to the bed where the Queen lay.

She kissed and blessed him, and then she gave him up with a gentle smile, saying she "hoped he would be very good, that it would be a very nice christening, and all the guests would enjoy themselves," and turned peacefully over on her bed. She was a very uncomplaining person—the Queen, and her name was Dolorez.

Everything went on as if she had been present. All, even the King himself, had grown used to her absence, for she was not strong, and for years had not joined in the gaieties. The noble company arrived from many countries; also the four-and-twenty godfathers and godmothers, who had been chosen with care, as the people who would be most useful to his Royal Highness should he ever want friends.

They came, walking two and two, with their coronets on their heads—dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses; they all kissed the child and pronounced the name which each had given him. Then the four-and-twenty names were shouted out, one after another, and written down, to be kept in the state records.

Everybody was satisfied except the little Prince, who moaned faintly under his christening robes, which nearly smothered him.

Though very few knew it, the Prince in coming to the chapel had met with an accident. A young lady of rank, whose duty it was to carry him to and from the chapel, had been so busy arranging her train with one hand, that she stumbled and let him fall. She picked him up—the accident was so slight it seemed hardly worth speaking of. The baby had turned pale, but did

not cry. No one knew that anything was wrong. Even if he had moaned, the silver trumpets were loud enough to drown his voice. It would have been a pity to let anything trouble such a day.

Such a procession! Heralds in blue and silver; pages in crimson and gold; and a troop of little girls in dazzling white, carrying baskets of flowers, which they strewed all the way before the child and the nurse,—finally the four and twenty godfathers and godmothers, splendid to look at.

The prince was a mere heap of lace and muslin, and had it not been for a canopy of white satin and ostrich feathers, which was held over him whenever he was carried, his presence would have been unnoticed.

"It is just like fairyland," said one little flower-girl to another, "and I think the only thing the Prince wants now is a fairy godmother."

"Does he?" said a shrill, but soft and not unpleasant voice, and a person no larger than a child was seen.

She was a pleasant little, old, grey-haired, grey-eyed woman, dressed all in grey.

"Take care and don't let the baby fall again."

The grand nurse started, flushing angrily.

"Old woman, you will be kind enough not to say, 'the baby,' but 'the Prince.' Keep away; his Royal Highness is just going to sleep."

"I must kiss him, I am his godmother."

"You!" cried the elegant lady-nurse.

"You!!" cried all the Court and the heralds began to blow the silver trumpets, to stop the conversation.

As the procession formed to return, the old woman stood on the topmost step, and stretched herself on tip-toe by the help of her stick, and gave the little Prince three kisses.

"Take yourself out of the way," cried the nurse, "or the king shall be informed immediately."

"The King knows nothing of me," replied the old

woman, with an indifferent air. "My friend in the palace is the King's wife." I know her Majesty well, and I love her and her child. And since you dropped him on the marble stairs I choose to take him for my own. I am his godmother, ready to help him whenever he wants me."

"You help him!" cried the group laughing. The little old woman paid no attention and her soft grey eyes were fixed on the Prince, who smiled back at her.

"His Majesty shall hear of this," said a gentleman-in-waiting.

"His Majesty will hear quite enough news in a minute or two," said the old woman sadly, kissing the little Prince on the forehead. "Be Prince Dolor, in memory of your mother Dolorez." Everybody started.

"Old woman, you are exceedingly ill-bred," cried a lady-in-waiting. Even if you did know, how dared you presume to hint that her most gracious Majesty is called Dolorez?"

"Was called Dolorez," said the old woman with a tender solemnity.

The first gentleman, called the Gold-stick-in-waiting, raised the stick to strike her, and all the rest stretched out their hands to seize her; but the gray mantle melted from between their fingers; and there came a heavy, muffled sound.

The great bell of the palace—the bell which was only heard on the death of some of the Royal family, and for as many times as he or she was years old—began to toll. They listened. Some one counted: "one-two-three-four"—up to nine and twenty—just the Queen's age.

The Queen, her Majesty, was dead. In the midst of the festivities she had passed away. When the little prince was carried back to his mother's room, there was no mother to kiss him.

As for his godmother—the little old woman in grey, nobody knew what became of her.

CHAPTER II.

It could not be said that the Prince missed his mother; children of his age cannot do that; but somehow, after she died everything seemed to go wrong with him. From a beautiful baby he became pale and sickly, seeming to have almost ceased growing, especially in his legs, which had been so fat and strong. But after the day of his christening they withered, and when he was nearly a year old, and his nurse tried to make him stand, he only tumbled down.

This happened so many times that at last people began to talk about it. A prince, and not able to stand on his legs! What a misfortune to the country!

After a time he became stronger and his body grew, but his limbs remained shrunken. No one talked of this to the King, for he was very sad.

The King desired that the Prince should keep the name given him by the little old woman in grey and so he was known as Dolor.

Once a week, according to established state custom, the Prince, dressed in his very best, was brought to the King, his father, for half an hour, but his Majesty was too melancholy to pay much attention to the child.

Only once, when the King and his brother were sitting together, with Prince Dolor playing in a corner of the room, dragging himself about with his arms, rather than his legs, it seemed to strike the father that all was not right with his son.

"How old is his Royal Highness?" said he, suddenly, to the nurse.

"Two years, three months, and five days, please your Majesty."

"It does not please me," said the King with a sigh. "He ought to be far more forward than he is. Is there not something wrong about him?"

"Oh, no," said the King's brother, exchanging meaning looks with the nurse. "Nothing to make your Majesty at all uneasy. No doubt his Royal Highness will outgrow it in time."

"Out-grow what?"

"A slight delicacy—ahem!—in the spine—something inherited, perhaps, from his dear mother."

"Ah, she was always delicate; but she was the sweetest woman that ever lived. Come here, my little son."

The Prince turned to his father a small, sweet, grave face—like his mother's, and the King smiled and held out his arms. But when the boy came to him, not running like a boy, but wriggling awkwardly along the floor, the royal countenance clouded.

"I ought to have been told of this. Send for all the doctors in my kingdom immediately."

They came, and agreed in what had been pretty well known before; that the prince must have been hurt when he was an infant. Did anybody remember?

No, nobody. Indignantly, all the nurses denied that any such accident had happened.

But of all this the King knew nothing, for, indeed, after the first shock of finding out that his son could not walk, and seemed never likely to walk, he interfered very little concerning him. He could not walk; his limbs were mere useless additions to his body, but the body itself was strong and sound, and his face was the same as ever—just like his mother's face, one of the sweetest in the world!

Even the King, indifferent as he was, sometimes looked at the little fellow with sad tenderness, noticing how cleverly he learned to crawl, and swing himself about by his arms, so that in his own awkward way he was as active as most children of his age.

"Poor little man! he does his best, and he is not unhappy," said the King to his brother. "I have appointed you as Regent. In case of my death, you will take care of my poor little boy?"

Soon after he said this, the King died, as suddenly and quietly as the Queen had done, and Prince Dolor was left without either father or mother—as sad a thing as could happen, even to a Prince.

He was more than that now, though. He was a king. In Nomansland as in other countries, the people were struck with grief one day and revived the next. "The king is dead—long live the king!" was the cry that rang through the nation, and almost before his late Majesty had been laid beside the queen, crowds came thronging from all parts to the royal palace, eager to see the new monarch.

They did see him—sitting on the floor of the council-chamber, sucking his thumb! And when one of the gentlemen-in-waiting lifted him up and carried him to the chair of state, and put the crown on his head, he shook it off again, it was so heavy and uncomfortable. Sliding down to the foot of the throne, he began playing with the gold lions that supported it;—laughing as if he had at last found something to amuse him.

"It is very unfortunate," said one of the lords. "It is always bad for a nation when its king is a child; but such a child—a permanent cripple, if not worse."

"Let us hope not worse," said another lord in a very hopeless tone, and looking towards the Regent, who stood erect and pretended to hear nothing. "I have heard that these kind of children with very large heads and great broad foreheads and staring eyes, are—well, well, let us hope for the best and be prepared for the worst. In the meantime—"

"Come forth and kiss the hilt of his sword," said the Regent—"I swear to perform my duties as Regent, to take care of his Majesty, and I shall do my humble best to govern the country."

Whenever the Regent and his sons appeared, they were received with shouts—"Long live the Regent!" "Long live the Royal family!"

As for the other child, his Royal Highness Prince Dolor—somehow people soon ceased to call him his Majesty, which seemed such a ridiculous title for a poor little fellow, a helpless cripple, with only head and trunk, and no legs to speak of—he was seen very seldom by anybody.

Sometimes people daring to peer over the high wall of the palace garden noticed there a pretty little crippled boy with large dreamy, thoughtful eyes, beneath the grave glance of which wrongdoers felt uneasy, and, although they did not know it then, the sight of him bearing his affliction made them better.

If anybody had said that Prince Dolor's uncle was cruel, he would have said that what he did was for the good of the country.

Therefore he went one day to the council-chamber, informed the ministers and the country that the young King was in failing health, and that it would be best to send him for a time to the Beautiful Mountains where his mother was born.

Soon after he obtained an order to send the King away—which was done in great state. The nation learned, without much surprise, that the poor little Prince—had fallen ill on the road and died within a few hours; so declared the physician in attendance, and the nurse who had been sent to take care of him. They brought the coffin back in great state, and buried him with his parents.

The country went into deep mourning for him, and then forgot him, and his uncle reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER III.

And what of the little lame prince, whom everybody seemed so easily to have forgotten?

Not everybody. There were a few kind souls, mothers of families, who had heard his sad story, and some servants about the palace, who had been familiar with his sweet ways—these many a time sighed and said, "Poor Prince Dolor!" Or, looking at the Beautiful Mountains, which were visible all over Nomansland, though few people ever visited them, "Well, perhaps his Royal Highness is better where he is."

They did not know that beyond the mountains, between them and the sea, lay a tract of country, level, barren, except for a short stunted grass, and here and there a patch of tiny flowers. Not a bush—not a tree—not a resting place for bird or beast in that dreary plain. It was not a pleasant place to live.

The only sign that human creatures had ever been near the spot was a large round tower which rose up in the centre of the plain. In form it resembled the Irish round towers, which have puzzled people for so long, nobody being able to find out when, or by whom they were made. It was circular, of very firm brickwork, with neither doors nor windows, until near the top, when you could perceive some slits in the wall, through which one could not possibly creep in or look out. Its height was nearly a hundred feet.

The plain was desolate, like a desert, only without sand, and led to nowhere except the still more desolate sea-coast; nobody ever crossed it. Whatever mystery there was about the tower, it and the sky and the plain kept to themselves.

It was a very great secret indeed, a state secret, which none but so clever a man as the present king of Nomansland would ever have thought of. How he carried it out, undiscovered, I cannot tell. People said, long afterwards, that it was by means of a gang of condemned criminals, who were set to work, and executed immediately after they had done, so that nobody knew anything, or in the least suspected the real fact.

Within twenty feet of the top, some ingenious architect had planned a perfect little house, divided into four rooms. By making skylights, and a few slits in the walls for windows, and raising a peaked roof which was hidden by the parapet, here was a dwelling complete; eighty feet from the ground and hard to reach.

Inside it was furnished with all the comfort and elegance imaginable; with lots of books and toys, and everything that the heart of a child could desire.

One winter night, when all the plain was white with moonlight, there was seen crossing it, a great tall, black horse, ridden by a man also big and equally black, carrying before him on the saddle a woman and a child. The sad fierce-looking woman was a criminal under sentence of death, but her sentence had been changed. She was to inhabit the lonely tower with the child; she was to live as long as the child lived—no longer. This, in order that she might take the utmost care of him; for those who put him there were equally afraid of his dying and of his living. And yet he was only a little gentle boy, with a sweet smile. He was very tired with his long journey and was clinging to the man's neck, for he was rather frightened.

The tired little boy was Prince Dolor. He was not dead at all. His grand funeral had been a pretence; a wax figure having been put in his place, while he was spirited away by the condemned woman and the black man. The latter was deaf and dumb, so could tell nothing.

When they reached the foot of the tower, there was light enough to see a huge chain dangling half way from the parapet. The deaf mute took from his saddle-wallet a sort of ladder, arranged in pieces like a puzzle, fitted it together, and lifted it up to meet the chain. Then he mounted to the top of the tower, and slung from it a chair, in which the woman and child placed themselves and were drawn up, never to come down again. The man descended the ladder, took it to pieces and disappeared across the plain. Every month he came and fastened his horse to the foot of the tower and climbed it as before, laden with provisions and many other things. He always saw the Prince, so as to make sure that the child was alive and well, and then went away until the following month.

Prince Dolor had every luxury that even a Prince could need, and the one thing wanting—love, never having known, he did not miss. His nurse was very kind to him, though she was a wicked woman. Perhaps it made her better to be shut up with an innocent child.

By-and-by he began to learn lessons—not that his nurse had been ordered to teach him, but she did it partly to amuse herself. She was not a stupid woman, and Prince Dolor was by no means a stupid child; so they got on very well.

When he grew older he began reading the books which the mute brought to him. As they told him of the things in the outside world he longed to see them.

From this time a change came over the boy. He began to look sad and thin, and to shut himself up for hours without speaking. His nurse had been forbidden, on pain of death, to tell him anything about himself. He knew he was Prince Dolor, because she always addressed him as 'My prince' and "your Royal Highness," but what a prince was, he had not the least idea.

He had been reading one day, but feeling all the while that to read about things which you never can

see is like hearing about a beautiful dinner while you are starving. He grew melancholy, gazing out of the window-slit.

Not a very cheerful view—just the plain and the sky—but he liked it. He used to think, if he could only fly out of that window, up to the sky or down to the plain, how nice it would be! Perhaps when he died—his nurse had told him once in anger that he would never leave the tower till he died—he might be able to do this.

“And I wish I had somebody to tell me all about it; about that and many other things; somebody that would be fond of me, like my poor white kitten.”

Here the tears came into his eyes, for the boy's one friend had been a little white kitten, which the deaf mute, kindly smiling, once took out of his pocket and gave him. For four weeks it was his constant companion and plaything, till one moonlight night it took a fancy for wandering, climbed on to the parapet of the tower, dropped over and disappeared. It was not killed, he hoped; indeed, he almost fancied he saw it pick itself up and scamper away, but he never caught sight of it again.

“Yes, I wish I had a person, a real live person, who would be fond of me and kind to me. Oh, I want somebody—dreadfully, dreadfully!”

As he spoke, there sounded behind him a slight tap-tap-tap, as of a cane, and twisting himself around, what do you think he saw? A curious little woman, no bigger than he might himself have been, had his legs grown, but she was not a child—she was an old woman with a sweet smile and a soft voice, and was carrying a cane.

“My own little boy,” she said, “I could not come to you until you had said you wanted me, but now you do want me, here I am.”

“And you are very welcome, madam,” replied the Prince. “May I ask you who you are? Perhaps my mother?”

"No, I am not your mother, though she was a dear friend of mine."

"Will you tell her to come and see me then?"

"She cannot; but I daresay she knows all about you and loves you. I love you, too, and I want to help you, my poor little boy."

"Why do you call me poor?" asked Prince Dolor in surprise.

The little old woman sighed and glanced down at his legs and feet, which he did not know were different from those of other children, and then to his sweet, bright face.

"I beg your pardon, My Prince," said she.

"Yes, I am a prince, and my name is Dolor; will you tell me yours, madam?"

The little old woman laughed like a chime of silver bells.

"I have so many that I don't know which to choose. It was I who gave you yours, and you will belong to me all your days. I am your godmother."

"Hurrah!" cried the little prince; "I am glad I belong to you, for I like you very much."

So they sat down and played and talked together.

"Are you very lonesome here?" asked the little old woman.

"Not particularly, thank you, godmother. I have my lessons to do, and my books to read."

"And you want for nothing?"

"Nothing. Yes, godmother, please bring me a little boy to play with?"

"Just the thing, alas, which I cannot give you."

His godmother took him in her arms and kissed him. By-and-by he kissed her at first awkwardly and shyly, then with all the strength of his warm little heart.

"Promise me that you will never go away, godmother."

"I must, but I will leave you a travelling cloak that

will take you wherever you want to go, and show you all that you wish to see."

"I don't need a cloak, for I never go out."

"Hush! the nurse is coming."

A grumpy voice and a rattle of plates and dishes was heard.

"It's my nurse, bringing my dinner; but I don't want dinner. I only want you. Will her coming drive you away, godmother?"

"Only for a while, only wish for me and I will return."

When the door opened, Prince Dolor shut his eyes; opening them again, nobody but his nurse was in the room, as his godmother had melted away.

"Such a heap of untidy books; and what's this rubbish?" said she, kicking a little bundle that lay beside them.

"Give it to me," cried the Prince; and reaching after it, he hid it under his pinafore.

It was, though she did not know this, his wonderful travelling-cloak.

CHAPTER IV.

The cloak outside, was the commonest looking bundle imaginable—Dolor touched it; it grew smaller, and he put it into his trouser's pocket and kept it there until he had a chance to look at it.

It seemed but a mere piece of cloth, dark green in color, being worn and shabby, though not dirty.

Prince Dolor examined it curiously; spread it out on the floor, then arranged it on his shoulders. It felt comfortable; but was the only shabby thing the Prince had ever seen in his life.

"And what use will it be to me?" said he sadly, "and what in the world shall I do with it?"

He folded it carefully and put it away in a safe corner of his toy-cupboard. After a time he nearly forgot the cloak and his godmother. Sometimes though, he recalled her sweet pleasant face; but as she never came, she gradually slipped out of his memory, until something happened which made him remember her, and want her as he had never wanted anything before.

Prince Dolor fell ill. He caught a complaint common to the people of Nomansland, called the doldrums, which made him restless, cross and disagreeable. Even when a little better, he was too weak to enjoy anything, but lay all day alone.

"I wonder what my godmother meant when she looked at my legs and sighed so bitterly? Why can't I walk like my nurse. It would be very nice to move about quickly or fly like a bird. How nice it must be to be a bird. If legs are no good, why can one not have wings? I am so tired and no one cares for me, except perhaps my godmother. Godmother, dear, have you forsaken me?"

He stretched himself wearily, gathered himself up, and dropped his head upon his hands; as he did so, he felt somebody kiss him on the back of his neck, and turning, found that he was resting on the warm shoulder of the little old woman.

How glad he was to see her. He put both his arms around her neck and kissed her lovingly.

"Stop, stop!" cried she, pretending to be smothered. "Only just let me have breath to speak one word. Tell me what has happened to you since I saw you."

"Nothing has happened," answered the Prince somewhat dolefully.

"And are you very unhappy, my boy?"

"So unhappy, that I was just thinking whether I could not jump down to the bottom of the tower."

"You must be content to stay where you are," said the little old woman, "for you are a prince, and must behave as such—where is your traveling-cloak?"

Prince Dolor blushed. "I—I put it away in the cup-board; I suppose it is there still."

"You have never used it; you dislike it?"

He hesitated, not wishing to be impolite. "Don't you think it's just a little old and shabby for a prince?"

The old woman laughed very sweetly.

"Why, if all the princes in the world craved for it, they couldn't get it, unless I gave it to them. Old and shabby! It's the most valuable thing imaginable? I thought I would give it to you, because—because you are different from other people."

"Am I?" asked the prince with tears in his eyes.

She touched his poor little legs. "These are not like the legs of other little boys."

"Indeed!—my nurse never told me that."

"I tell you, because I love you."

"Tell me what, dear godmother?"

"That you will never be able to walk, or run, or

jump, but your life may be a very happy life for all that. Do not be afraid."

"I am not afraid," said the boy, and his lip began to quiver, though he did not cry.

Though he did not wholly understand, he began to guess what his godmother meant. He had never seen any real live boys, but he had seen pictures of them; running and jumping; which he had admired and tried hard to imitate, but always failed. Now, he began to understand that we cannot always have things as we want them, but as they are, and that we must learn to bear them and make the best of them.

She comforted him and whispered in her sweet, strong, cheerful voice—"Never mind!"

"No, I don't think I do mind, that is, I won't mind."

"That is right, My Prince! Let us put our shoulders to the wheel—"

"We are in Hopeless Tower and there is no wheel to put our shoulders to," said the child sadly.

"You little matter-of-fact goose! Well for you that you have a godmother called—"Stuff and Nonsense."

"Stuff and Nonsense! What a funny name!"

"Some people give it to me, but they are not my most intimate friends. You may give me any name you please; but I am your godmother. I have few godchildren; those I have love me dearly, and find me the greatest blessing in all the world."

"I can well believe it," cried the little lame Prince."

"Bring the cloak out of the rubbish cupboard, and shake the dust off it, quick!" said she to Prince Dolor. "Spread it out on the floor, and wait till the split closes and the edges turn up. Then open the skylight, set yourself on the cloak, and say, 'Abracadabra, dum dum dum,' and—see what will happen!"

The Prince burst into a fit of laughing. It all seemed so exceedingly silly, and his godmother laughed too.

"Believe me or not, it doesn't matter," said she. "Here is the cloak; when you want to go travelling on it, say, Abracadabra dum dum dum; when you want to come back again, say, Abracadabra tum tum ti. That's all, good-bye."

A puff of pleasant air and his godmother was gone.

"How rosy your Royal Highness's cheeks are! You seem to have grown better," said the nurse entering the room.

"I have," replied the Prince—he felt kindly, even to his grim nurse. "Let me have my dinner, and you go to your sewing."

The instant she was gone, Prince Dolor sprang from his sofa, and with one or two of his frog-like jumps, he reached the cupboard where he kept his toys, and looked everywhere for his traveling-cloak.

Alas! It was not there.

While he was ill, his nurse, had made a grand clearance of all his "rubbish," all the treasures of his baby days, which he could not bear to part with. Though he seldom played with them now, he liked just to feel they were there.

They were all gone! and with them the traveling cloak. He sat down on the floor, looking at the empty shelves, then burst out sobbing as if his heart would break.

"And it is all my own fault," he cried. "I ought to have taken better care of my godmother's gift. Oh, godmother, forgive me! I'll never be so careless again. I'll never be so careless again. I don't know what the cloak is exactly, but I am sure it is something precious. Help me to find it again. Oh, don't let it be stolen from me—don't please."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed a silvery voice. "Why, that traveling-cloak is the one thing in the world which nobody can steal. It is of no use to anybody except the owner. Open your eyes, and see what you can see."

His dear old godmother, he thought, and turned eagerly round. But no; he only beheld, lying in a corner of the room, his precious traveling-cloak.

Prince Dolor darted towards it, tumbling several times on the way. Snatching it to his breast, he hugged and kissed it. Then he began unrolling it, wondering each minute what would happen.

CHAPTER V.

No doubt you think Prince Dolor was unhappy. If you had seen him as he sat patiently untying his wonderful cloak, which was done up in a very tight parcel, using his deft little hands, and knitting his brows with determination, while his eyes glistened with pleasure, you might have changed your opinion.

When Prince Dolor had carefully untied all the knots, the cloak began to undo itself. Slowly unfolding, it laid itself down on the carpet, as flat as if it had been ironed; the split joined with a little sharp crick-crack, and the rim turned up all round till it was breast-high; for the meantime the cloak had grown and grown, and become quite large enough for one person to sit in it, as comfortable as if in a boat.

The Prince watched it rather anxiously; it was such an extraordinary thing. However, he was no coward, but a thorough boy, who, if he had been like other boys, would doubtless have grown up daring and adventurous—a soldier—a sailor, or the like. As it was, he could only show his courage by being afraid of nothing, and by doing boldly all that was in his power. And I am not sure but that in this way he showed more real valor than if he had had six pairs of proper legs.

He said to himself, "What a goose I am! As if my dear godmother would ever have given me anything to hurt me. Here goes!"

So, with one of his active leaps, he sprang right into the middle of the cloak, where he squatted down, wrapping his arms tight round his knees, for they shook a little and his heart beat fast. But there he sat, waiting for what might happen next.

Nothing did happen, and he began to think nothing would when he recollected the words, "Abracadabra, dum, dum, dum!"

He repeated them, laughing all the while, they seemed such nonsense. And then—and then—

The cloak rose, slowly and steadily at first, only a few inches, then gradually higher and higher, till it nearly touched the skylight. Prince Dolor's head actually bumped against the glass.

Then he suddenly remembered his godmother's command—"Open the skylight!"

Without a moment's delay he began searching for the bolt, the cloak remaining balanced in the air. The minute the window was opened, out it sailed—right into the clear fresh air, with nothing between it and the cloudless blue. Prince Dolor had never felt such delicious sensation before.

The happiness of the Prince cannot be described, when he got out of Hopeless Tower, and found himself for the first time in the pure open air, with the sky above him and the earth below.

True, there was nothing but earth and sky; no houses, no trees, no rivers, mountains, seas—not a beast on the ground, or a bird in the air. But to him even the level plain looked beautiful; and then there was the glorious arch of the sky, with a little young moon sitting in the west like a baby queen. And the evening breeze was so sweet and fresh, it kissed him like his godmother's kisses; and by-and-by a few stars came out, first two or three, and then quantities—quantities! so that when he began to count them, he was utterly bewildered.

By this time, however, the breeze had become cold and as he had, as he said, no outdoor clothes, poor Prince Dolor began to shiver.

"Perhaps I had better go home," thought he.

But how—for in his excitement the other words which his godmother had told him to use had slipped

his memory, and the cloak only went faster and faster, skimming on through the dusky, empty air.

The poor little Prince began to feel frightened. What if his wonderful traveling-cloak should keep on thus traveling, perhaps to the world's end, carrying with it a poor, tired, hungry boy.

"Dear godmother," he cried pitifully, "do help me! Tell me just this once and I'll never forget again."

Instantly the words came to him and he repeated them. "Abracadabra, tum, tum, ti!" The cloak began to turn slowly, and immediately started back, as fast as ever, in the direction of the tower.

The skylight he found exactly as he had left it, and he slipped in as easily as he had gotten out. He had scarcely reached the floor when he heard his nurse's voice outside.

"Bless us! what has become of your Royal Highness all this time? To sit stupidly here at the window until it is quite dark and leave the skylight open too. Prince, what can you be thinking of? You are the silliest boy I ever knew."

But he did not mind what she said.

The instant Prince Dolor got off the cloak it folded itself up into a tiny parcel and rolled itself into the farthest corner of the room. If the nurse had seen it she would have taken it for a mere bundle of rubbish. She brought in the supper and lit the candles, her face as unhappy as usual. But Prince Dolor only saw, hidden in the corner where nobody else would see it, his wonderful traveling-cloak. He ate heartily, scarcely hearing his nurse's grumbling.

"Poor woman!" he thought, "*she* hasn't a traveling-cloak!"

And when he crept into his little bed, where he lay awake a good while watching the stars, his chief thought was, "I must be up very early to-morrow morn-

ing and get my lessons done, and then I'll go traveling all over the world on my beautiful cloak."

So, next day, he opened his eyes with the sun, and went with a good heart to his lessons, which for the first time he found dull, and the instant they were over he crept across the floor, undid the shabby little bundle, climbed on a chair, and thence to the table so as to unbar the skylight; said his magic charm, and was away out of the window in a minute.

He was accustomed to sit so quietly always, that his nurse, though only in the next room did not miss him, and she could not have missed him anyway for the clever godmother made an image, which she set on the window-sill reading and which looked so like Prince Dolor that any common observer would never have guessed the difference.

And all this while the happy little fellow was away floating in the air on his magic cloak, and seeing all sorts of wonderful things—or they seemed wonderful to him, who had hitherto seen nothing at all.

First, there were the flowers that grew on the plain, which, whenever the cloak came near enough, he strained his eyes to look at; they were tiny, but very beautiful.

"I wonder," he thought, "whether I could see better through a pair of glasses like those my nurse reads with, and takes such care of. How I should take care of them too! if only I had a pair!"

Immediately he felt a pair of the prettiest gold spectacles ever seen; and looking downwards, he found that, though ever so high above the ground, he could see every blade of grass, every tiny bud and flower—nay, even the insects that walked over them.

"Thank you, thank you!" he cried to his dear godmother, whom he felt sure had sent them. He amused himself for ever so long, gazing down upon the grass, every square foot of which was a mine of wonders.

Then, just to rest his eyes, he turned them up to the sky, at which he had looked so often and seen nothing.

Now he saw a long, black wavy line, moving on in the distance. Looking at it through his spectacles, he discovered that it was a long string of birds, flying one after the other, their wings moving steadily and their heads pointed in one direction, as steadily as if each were a little ship.

"They must be the passage-birds flying seaward!" cried the boy, who had read a little about them. "Oh! how I should like to see them quite close, and to know where they come from, and where they are going!"

The cloak gave a sudden bound forward, and he found himself high up in the air, in the very midst of the birds.

"Oh I wish I were going with you, you lovely creatures!" cried the boy. "I'm getting so tired of this dull plain, and the dreary and lonely tower. I do so want to see the world! Pretty swallows, dear swallows, tell me what it looks like—the beautiful, wonderful world!"

But the birds flew past and the boy looked after them with envy. Then he settled himself down in the centre of the cloak, feeling quite sad and lonely.

"I think I'll go home," said he, and repeated his "Abracadabra, tum tum, ti!" with a rather heavy heart. The more he had, the more he wanted.

He did not like to vex his godmother by calling for her, and telling her how unhappy he was, in spite of all her goodness; so he just kept his trouble to himself, went back to his lonely tower, and spent three days there without attempting another journey on his travelling-cloak.

CHAPTER VI.

The fourth day it happened that the deaf mute paid his accustomed visit, after which Prince Dolor's spirits rose. They always did, when he got the new books, which the King of Nomansland regularly sent to his nephew. He paid no attention to the toys which were brought, as he considered himself a big boy.

Prince Dolor leaned over and looked at the mute's horse which was feeding at the foot of the tower and thought how grand it must be to get upon its back and ride away.

"Suppose I was a knight," he said to himself; "then I should be obliged to ride out and see the world."

But he kept all these thoughts to himself, and just sat still, devouring his new books until he had come to end of them all.

"I wonder," he would sometimes think,—"I wonder what it feels like to be on the back of a horse, galloping away, or holding the reins in a carriage, and tearing across the country, or jumping a ditch, or running a race, such as I read of or see in pictures. What a lot of things there are that I should like to do! But first, I should like to go and see the world. I'll try."

Apparently it was his godmother's plan always to let him try, and try hard, before he gained anything. This day the knots that tied up his traveling-cloak were more than usually troublesome, and it was a full half hour before he got out into the open air, and found himself floating merrily over the top of the tower.

Hitherto, in all his journeys he had never let himself go out of sight of home, but now he felt sick of the very look of his tower with its round smooth walls.

"Off we go!" cried he, when the cloak stirred itself with a slight slow motion, as if waiting his orders. "Anywhere—anywhere, so that I am away from here, and out into the world."

As he spoke, the cloak bounded forward and went skimming through the air, faster than the very fastest railway train.

"Gee-up, gee-up!" cried Prince Dolor in great excitement. "This is as good as riding a horse," and tossed his head back to meet the fresh breeze, and pulled his coat-collar up and his hat down, as he felt the wind grow keener and colder, colder than anything he had ever known.

"What does it matter, though?" said he. "I'm a boy, and boys ought not to mind anything."

Still, by-and-by he began to shiver, and, as he had come away without his dinner, grew frightfully hungry. The sunshine changed to rain, and he got soaked through and through in a very few minutes.

"Shall I turn back?" meditated he. "Suppose I say, 'Abracadabra?'"

Here he stopped, for already the cloak gave a lurch as if it were expecting to be sent home.

"No—I can't go back! I must go forward and see the world, but oh! if I had but the shabbiest old rug to shelter me from the rain, or the driest morsel of bread and cheese, just to keep me from starving! Still, I don't much mind, I'm a prince and ought to be able to stand anything. Hold on, cloak, we'll make the best of it."

No sooner had he said this than he felt stealing over his knees something warm and soft; in fact, a most beautiful bearskin, which folded itself round him and cuddled him up as closely as if he had been the cub of the kind old mother-bear that once owned it. Then feeling in his pocket, which suddenly stuck out in a marvelous way, he found, not exactly bread and cheese, nor even sandwiches, but a packet of the most

delicious food he had ever tasted. He ate his dinner until he grew so thirsty he did not know what to do.

"Couldn't I have just one drop of water, if it wouldn't trouble you too much, kindest of godmother's?"

He considered this a difficult request to grant for he was so far from the ground that he could not expect to find a well. He forgot one thing—the rain. While he spoke, it came on in another wild burst, as if the clouds had poured themselves out in a passion of crying, wetting him certainly, but leaving behind in a large glass vessel which he had never noticed before, enough water to quench the thirst of two or three boys at least. And it was so fresh, so pure—as water from the clouds always is, that he drank it with the greatest delight.

Also, as soon as it was empty, the rain filled it again, so that he was able to wash his face and hands. Then the sun came out and dried him in no time. After that he curled himself up under the bearskin rug and shut his eyes just for one minute. The next minute he was sound asleep.

When he awoke, he found himself floating over a country quite unlike anything he had ever seen before.

Yet it was nothing but what most of you children see every day and never notice—a pretty country landscape. It had nothing in it grand or lovely—was simply pretty, nothing more; yet to Prince Dolor who had never seen beyond the level plain, it appeared wonderful.

First, there was a river, which came tumbling down the hillside.

"It is so active, so alive! I like things active and alive!" cried he, and watched it shimmering and dancing, whirling and leaping.

All this the boy saw, either with his own naked eye, or through his gold spectacles. He saw also as in a picture, beautiful but silent, many other things which struck him with wonder, especially a grove of trees.

Only think, to have lived to his age and never have seen trees! As he floated over these oaks, they seemed to him the most curious sight imaginable.

"If I could only get nearer, so as to touch them," said he, and immediately the obedient cloak ducked down; Prince Dolor made a snatch at the topmost twig of the tallest tree, and caught a bunch of leaves in his hand. Just a bunch of green leaves—such as we have seen many times, yet how wonderful they were to him, and he examined the leaves with the greatest curiosity, and also a little caterpillar that he found walking over one of them. He coaxed it to take a walk over his finger. It amused him for a long time; and when a sudden gust of wind blew it overboard, leaves and all, he felt quite disconsolate.

"Still there must be many live creatures in the world besides caterpillars. I should like to see a few of them."

The cloak gave a little slip down, as if to say, "All right, My Prince," and bore him across the oak forest to a long fertile valley. It was made up of cornfields, pasture fields, brooks, and ponds, and in it were a quantity of living creatures, wild and tame. Cows, horses, lambs and sheep fed in the meadows, pigs and fowls walked about the barnyards. In lonelier places were rabbits, wild birds inhabited the fields and woods.

Through his wonderful spectacles the Prince could see everything, but he was too high up to hear anything except a faint murmur, which only aroused his anxiety to hear more.

"I wonder if my godmother would give me a second pair of ears?" he said.

Scarcely had he spoken, than he found lying on his lap the most curious little parcel, all done up in silver paper. And it contained a pair of silver ears, which, when he tried them on, fitted so exactly over his own, that he hardly felt them, except for the difference they made in his hearing.

The sound which greeted his ears is one which we have heard many times, but Prince Dolor, who had lived all his days in the dead silence of Hopeless Tower, heard it for the first time. And oh! If you had seen his face.

He listened, and listened, and looked and looked. The motion of the animals delighted him; cows walking, horses galloping, little lambs and calves running races across the meadows, were a great treat for him to watch.

"Godmother," he said, having now begun to believe that, whether he saw her or not, she could hear him—"Godmother, I should like better to see a creature like myself. Couldn't you show me just one little boy?"

Suddenly, a shrill whistle startled him, even through his silver ears, and looking downwards, he saw start up from behind a bush on a common, something—

Neither a sheep, nor a horse, nor a cow—nothing upon four legs. This creature had only two; but they were long, straight and strong. And it had a lithe active body, and a curly head of black hair. It was a boy about the Prince's own age—but, oh! so different. His face was almost as red as his hands, and his shaggy hair was matted like the backs of the sheep he was tending. But he was a rather nice-looking lad; and seemed so bright and healthy and "jolly," that the little Prince watched him with great admiration.

"Might he come and play with me? I would drop down to the ground to him, or fetch him up to me."

But the cloak, usually so obedient, disobeyed him now. There was evidently some things which his godmother could or would not give. The cloak hung high in air, never attempting to descend. The shepherd lad took it for a large bird, and shading his eyes, looked up at it, then turned round and stretched himself, for he had been half asleep, and his dog had been guarding the sheep.

The boy called to the dog and they started off together for a race across the fields. Prince Dolor watched them with great excitement, for a while, then the sweet, pale face grew a trifle paler, the lips began to quiver and the eyes to fill.

"How nice it must be to run like that!" he said softly, thinking that never—no, never in this world—would he be able to do the same.

"I think I had rather not look at him again," said the poor little Prince, drawing himself back into the centre of his cloak, and resuming his favorite posture, sitting like a Turk, with his arms wrapped around his feeble useless legs.

"You're no good to me," he said, patting them mournfully. "You never will be any good to me. I wonder why I have you at all; I wonder why I was born at all, since I was not to grow up like other little boys."

Prince Dolor sat a good while thus, and seemed to grow years older in a few minutes.

Then he fancied the cloak began to rock gently to and fro, with a soothing kind of motion, as if he were in somebody's arms; somebody who did not speak, but loved and comforted him without need of words.

He had placed himself so he could see nothing but the sky, and had taken off his silver ears, as well as his gold spectacles—what was the use of either when he had no legs to walk or run?—Up from below there rose a delicious sound.

"You have heard it hundreds of times, my children, and so have I. When I was a child I thought there was nothing so sweet; and I think so still. It was just the song of a lark, mounting higher and higher, until it came so close that Prince Dolor could distinguish its quivering wings and tiny body, almost too tiny to contain such a gush of music.

"Oh, you beautiful, beautiful bird!" cried he; "I

should dearly like to take you in and cuddle you. That is, if I might—if I dared."

He was so absorbed that he forgot all regret and pain, forgot everything in the world except the little lark, and he was just wondering if it would soar out of sight, when it suddenly closed its wings, as larks do when they mean to drop to the ground. But, instead of dropping to the ground, it dropped right into the little boy's breast.

When he came in sight of Hopeless Tower, a painful thought struck him.

"My pretty bird, what am I to do with you? If I take you into my room and shut you up there, you will surely die for I heard my nurse once say that the nicest thing she ever ate in her life was lark pie!"

The little boy shivered all over at the thought, and in another minute he had made up his mind.

"No, my bird, nothing so dreadful shall happen to you if I can help it; I would rather do without you altogether. Fly away, my darling! Good-bye my merry, merry bird."

Opening his two caressing hands, in which, as for protection, he had folded it, he let the lark go. It lingered a minute, perched on the rim of the cloak, and looked at him with eyes of almost human tenderness; then away it flew.

But, sometime after, when Prince Dolor had eaten his supper, and gone to bed, suddenly he heard outside the window a little faint carol—faint but cheerful—even though it was the middle of the night.

The dear little lark, it had not flown away after all, but had remained about the tower and he listened to its singing and went to sleep very happy.

CHAPTER VII.

After this journey which had given the Prince so much pain, his desire to see the world had somehow faded away. He contented himself with reading his books, and looking out of the tower windows, and listening to his beloved little lark, which had come home with him that day, and had never left him again.

True, it kept out of the way; but though his nurse sometimes faintly heard it, and said, "What is that horrid noise outside?" she never got the faintest chance to make the lark into a pie.

All during the winter the little bird cheered and amused him. He scarcely needed anything more—not even his traveling cloak, which lay bundled unnoticed in a corner, tied up in its many knots.

Prince Dolor was now a big boy. Not tall—alas! he never could be that, with his poor little shrunken legs. But he was stout and strong, with great sturdy shoulders, and muscular arms, upon which he could swing himself about almost as well as a monkey. His face, too, was very handsome; thinner, firmer, more manly; but still the sweet face of his childhood—his mother's own face.

The boy was not a stupid boy either. He could learn almost anything he chose—and he did choose, which was more than half the battle. He never gave up his lessons until he had learned them all—never thought it a punishment that he had to work at them, and that they cost him a deal of trouble sometimes.

"But," thought he, "men work, and it must be so grand to be a man;—a prince to; and I fancy princes work harder than anybody—except kings. The princes

I read about generally turn into kings. I wonder"—the boy was always wondering—"Nurse"—and one day he startled her with a sudden question—"tell me—shall I ever be a king?"

The woman stood, perplexed beyond expression. So long a time had passed by since her crime—if it were a crime—and her sentence, that she now seldom thought of either. She had even grown used to her punishment. And the little prince whom she at first hated, she had learned to love—at least, enough to feel sorry for him.

The Prince noticed that her feeling toward him was changing and did not shrink from her.

"Nurse—dear nurse," said he, one day, "I don't mean to vex you, but tell me—what is a king?" Shall I ever be one?"

Then the idea came to her—what harm would it be, even if he did know his own history? Perhaps he ought to know it—for there had been many changes in Normansland, as in most other countries. Something might happen—who could tell? Possibly a crown would yet be set upon those pretty, fair curls—which she began to think prettier than ever when she saw the imaginary crown upon them.

She sat down, considering whether her oath, "never to say a word to Prince Dolor about himself," would be broken, if she were to take a pencil and write, what was to be told. It was a miserable deception. But then, she was an unhappy woman, more to be pitied than scorned.

After long doubt, she put her finger to her lips, and taking the Prince's slate—with a sponge tied to it, ready to rub out the writing in a minute—she wrote:

"You are a king."

Prince Dolor started. His face grew pale and then flushed all over; his eyes glistened; he held himself erect. Lame as he was, anybody could see he was born to be a king.

"Hush!" said the nurse, as he was beginning to speak. And then, terribly frightened all the while, she wrote down in a few sentences, his history. How his parents had died, how his uncle had stolen the throne, and sent him to end his days in this lonely tower.

"I, too," added she, bursting into tears. "Unless, indeed, you could get out into the world, and fight for your rights like a man. And fight for me also, My Prince, that I may not die in this desolate place."

"Poor old nurse," said the boy tenderly. For somehow, boy as he was, when he heard he was born to be a king, he felt like a man—like a king—who could afford to be tender because he was strong.

He scarcely slept that night, and barely listened to the singing of the lark. Things more important were in his mind.

"Suppose," thought he, "I were to go into the world, no matter how it hurts me. The people might only laugh at me, but still I might show them I could do something. At any rate, I might go and see if there was anything for me to do. Godmother, help me!"

It was so long since he had asked for help, that he was hardly surprised when he got no answer. He sprang out of bed, dressed himself, and leaped to the corner where lay his traveling-cloak and unrolled it.

Then he jumped into the middle of it, said his charm, and was out through the skylight immediately.

"Good-bye, pretty lark!" he shouted, as he passed it on the wing. "You have been my pleasure, now I must go and work. Sing to old nurse until I come back again. Good-bye!"

But as the cloak hung motionless in air, he suddenly remembered that he had not made up his mind where to go—indeed, he did not know, and there was nobody to tell him.

"Godmother," he cried. "you know what I want.

"Tell me where I ought to go; show me whatever I ought to see—never mind what I like."

This journey was not for pleasure as before. He was not a baby now, to do nothing but play. Men work, this much Prince Dolor knew. As the cloak started off, over freezing mountain tops, and desolate forests, smiling plains and great lakes, he was often rather frightened. But he crouched down, and wrapping himself up in his bear-skin waited for what was to happen.

After some-time he heard a murmur in the distance, and stretching his chin over the edge of the cloak, Prince Dolor saw—far, far below him, yet with his gold spectacles and silver ears on he could distinctly hear and see—a great city!

Suppose you were to see a large city from the upper air; where, with your ears and eyes open, you could take in everything at once. What would it look like? How would you feel about it? I hardly know myself. Do you?

Prince Dolor was as bewildered as a blind person who is suddenly made to see.

He gazed down on the city below him, and then put his hand over his eyes.

"I can't bear to look at it, it is so beautiful—so dreadful. And I don't understand it—not one bit. I wish I had some one to tell me about it."

"Do you? Then pray speak to me."

The voice that squeaked out this reply came from a great black and white bird that flew into the cloak and began walking round and round on the edge of it with a dignified stride.

"I haven't the honor of your acquaintance," said the boy politely.

"My name is Mag and I shall be happy to tell you everything you want to know. My family is very old; we have builded in this palace for many years. I am well acquainted with the King, the Queen, and the little

princes and princesses—also the maids of honor, and all the inhabitants of the city. I talk a great deal, but I always talk sense, and I dare say I shall be very useful to a poor, little, ignorant boy like you.”

“I am a prince,” said the other gently.

“All right. And I am a magpie.”

She settled herself at his elbow and began to chatter away, pointing out with one skinny claw every object of interest, evidently believing, as no doubt all its inhabitants did, that there was no city in the world like the great capital of Nomansland.

Mag said that it was the finest city in the world but there were a few things in it that surprised Prince Dolor. One half the people seemed so happy and contented and the other half were so poor and miserable. I would try to make it a little more equal if I were king,” he said.

“But you’re not the king,” returned the magpie loftily. “Shall I show you the royal palace?”

It was a magnificent palace covering many acres of ground. It had terraces and gardens; battlements and towers. But since the Queen died the windows through which she looked at the Beautiful Mountains, had been closed and boarded up. The room was so little that no one cared to use it.

“I should like to see the King,” said Prince Dolor, and as he spoke Mag flew down to the palace roof, where the cloak rested, settling down between the great stocks of chimneys as comfortably as if on the ground. Mag pecked at the tiles with her beak and immediately a little hole opened, a sort of door, through which could be seen distinctly the chamber below.

“Now pop down on your knees and take a peep at his Majesty.”

The Prince gazed eagerly down, into a large room, the largest room he had ever beheld, with furniture and hangings grander than anything he could have

ever imagined. A sunbeam struck across the carpet and it looked like a bed of flowers.

"Where is the King?" asked the puzzled boy.

"There," said Mag, pointing with one wrinkled claw to a magnificent bed, large enough to contain six people. In the centre of it quite straight and still with its head on the lace pillow lay a small figure, something like waxwork, fast asleep. There were a number of sparkling rings on the tiny yellow hands; the eyes were shut, and the nose looked sharp and thin, and the long grey beard hid the mouth, and lay over the breast. Two little flies buzzing about the curtains of the bed was the only audible sound.

"Is that the King?" whispered Prince Dolor.

"Yes," replied the bird.

He had been angry ever since he learned how his uncle had taken the crown and had felt as if, king as he was, he should like to strike him, this great, strong wicked man.

Why, you might as well have struck a baby! How helpless he lay! with his eyes shut, and his idle hands folded; they had no more work to do, bad or good.

"What is the matter with him?" asked the Prince.

"He is dead," said the magpie with a croak.

No, there was not the least use in being angry with him now. On the contrary, the Prince felt almost sorry for him.

"What shall we do now?" asked the magpie.

"There's nothing much more to be done with his Majesty, except a funeral. Suppose we float up again at a safe distance and see it all. It will be such fun. There will be a great row in the city and I wonder who we shall have in his place?

"What will be fun?"

"A Revolution."

As soon as the Cathedral bell began to toll, and the minute guns to fire, announcing to the Kingdom that

it was without a king, the people gathered in crowds. The murmur now and then rose into a shout, and the shout into a roar. When Prince Dolor, quietly floating in the upper air, caught the sound of their different and opposite cries, it seemed to him as if the whole city had gone mad together.

"Long live the King!" "The King is dead—down with the King!" "Down with the crown and the King too!" "Hurrah for the Republic!" "Hurrah for no government at all."

Such were the shouts which came up to him and then began, oh! what a scene! The country was in a revolution. Soldiers were shooting down people by hundreds in the streets, scaffolds were being erected, heads dropping off, houses burned, and women and children murdered.

Prince Dolor saw it all. Things happened so fast after one another that he nearly lost his senses.

"Oh, let me go home," he cried at last, stopping his ears and shutting his eyes, "Only let me go home!" for even his lonely tower and its dreariness and silence, was absolute paradise after this.

Prince Dolor fell into a kind of swoon and when he awoke he found himself in his own room.

CHAPTER VIII.

Next morning when Prince Dolor awoke he perceived that his room was empty.

Very uncomfortable he felt, of course; and just a little frightened. Especially when he began to call again and again, but nobody answered.

"Nurse—dear nurse—please come back!" he called out. "Come back, and I will be the best boy in all the land."

And when she did not come back, and nothing but silence answered his lamentable call, he very nearly began to cry.

"This won't do," he said at last, dashing the tears from his eyes. "It's just like a baby, and I'm a big boy—shall be a man some day. What has happened, I wonder? I'll go and see."

He sprang out of bed and crawled from room to room on his knees.

"What in the world am I to do?" thought he, and sat down in the middle of the floor, half inclined to believe that it would be better to give up entirely, lay himself down and die.

This feeling, however, did not last long. He jumped up and looked out of the window. No help there. At first he only saw the broad bleak sunshiny plain. But, by-and-by, in the mud around the base of the tower he saw clearly the marks of horses' feet, and just in the spot where the deaf mute always tied his great black charger, there lay the remains of a bundle of hay.

"Yes, that's it. He has come and gone, taking nurse with him. Poor nurse! how glad she must have been to go!"

That was Prince Dolor's first thought. His second was one of indignation at her cruelty.

He decided that it would be easier to die here alone than out in the world, among the terrible doings which he had just beheld.

The deaf mute had come—contrived somehow to make the nurse understand that the king was dead, and that she need have no fear in going back to the capital.

"I hope she'll enjoy it," said the Prince.

And then a kind of remorse smote him for feeling so bitterly towards her, after all the years she had taken care of him—grudgingly, perhaps, still, she had taken care of him.

For the second time he tried to dress himself, and then to do everything he could for himself—even to sweeping the hearth and putting on more coals.

He then thought of his godmother. Not of calling her or asking her to help him—she had evidently left him to help himself, and he was determined to try his best to do it, being a very proud and independent boy—but he remembered her tenderly.

After his first despair, he was comfortable and happy in his solitude, but when it was time to go to bed, he was very lonely, even his little lark was silent and as for his traveling cloak, either he never thought about it, or else it had been spirited away—for he made no use of it, nor attempted to do so.

On the sixth day, Prince Dolor had a strange contented look in his face. Get out of the tower he could not; the ladder the deaf mute used was always carried away again and his food was nearly gone. So he made up his mind to die. Not that he wished to die; on the contrary, there was a great deal that he wished to live to do. Dying did not seem so very dreadful; not even to lie quietly like his uncle, whom he had entirely forgiven now.

"Suppose I had grown to be a man, and had had

work to do, and people to care for, and was so useful and busy that they liked me, and perhaps even forgot that I was lame. Then, it would have been nice to have lived, I think," and tears came into the little fellow's eyes. Then he heard a trumpet, one of the great silver trumpets so admired in Nomansland. Not pleasant music, but very bold and grand.

The poor condemned woman had not been such a wicked woman after all. As soon as she heard of the death of the King, she persuaded the deaf-mute to take her away with him, and they galloped like the wind from city to city, spreading everywhere the news that Prince Dolor's death and burial had been an invention concocted by his wicked uncle—that he was alive and well, and the noblest young Prince that ever was born.

It was a bold stroke, but it succeeded. People jumped at the idea of this Prince, who was the son of their late good King and Queen.

"Hurrah for Prince Dolor! Let him be our king!" rang from end to end of the kingdom. They were determined to have him reign over them. Accordingly no sooner was the late king laid in his grave than they pronounced him a usurper; turned all his family out of the palace, and left it empty for the reception of the new sovereign, whom they went to fetch with great rejoicing.

They hailed him with delight, as prince and king and went down on their knees before him, offering the crown to him.

"Yes," he said, "if you desire it, I will be your king. And I will do my best to make my people happy."

"Oh! said he, "if before I go, I could only see my dear godmother." He gazed sadly up to the skylight, whence there came pouring a stream of sunrays like a bridge between heaven and earth. Sliding down it, came the little woman in grey.

He held out his arms in eager delight.

"Oh, godmother, you have not forsaken me!"

"Not at all my son. You may not have seen me, but I have seen you many a time."

"How?"

"Oh, never mind. I can turn into anything I please you know."

"A lark, for instance," cried Prince Dolor.

"Or a Magpie," answered she with a capital imitation of Mag's croaky voice.

"You will not leave me now that I am king? Otherwise I had rather not be a king at all," said he.

The little old woman laughed gaily. "Forsake you? That is impossible. But now I must go. Good-bye! Open the window and out I fly."

Prince Dolor tried to hold his godmother fast, but in vain. A knocking was heard at the door, and the little woman vanished.

His godmother helped him out of many difficulties for there was never such a wise old woman.

He was very happy and contented; first, because he took his affliction patiently; second, because being a brave man, he bore it bravely. Therefore other people grew to love him so well, that I think hundreds of his subjects might have been found who were almost ready to die for their poor lame king.

He did a good many things, however, which a little astonished his subjects. First, he pardoned the condemned woman, who had been his nurse and ordered that there should be no such thing as the death punishment in Nomansland.

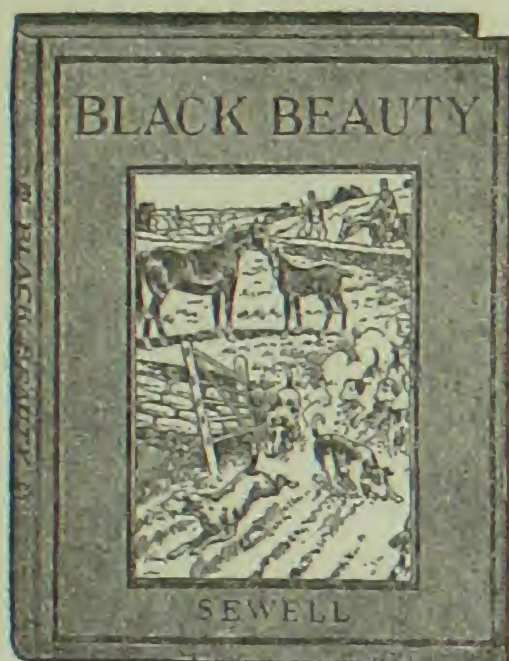
Then he chose the eldest son of his eldest cousin, a quiet, unobtrusive boy, to be educated as heir to the throne.

In course of time, when the little prince had grown into a tall young man, King Dolor fixed a day when the people should assemble in the great square of the capital to see the young prince installed solemnly in his new duties.

The king lifted up his thin slender hand and there came a silence over the vast crowd immediately as he pronounced the vows which made the young prince king.

“My people he said, I am tired; I want to rest; it is time for me to go and I do not think I shall come back any more. He drew a little bundle out of his breast pocket. Then, so suddenly that even those nearest to his Majesty could not tell how, the king was away—floating right up in the air—upon something they knew not what. Whither he went or who went with him it is impossible to say, but I myself believe that his godmother took him on his traveling cloak to the Beautiful Mountains.

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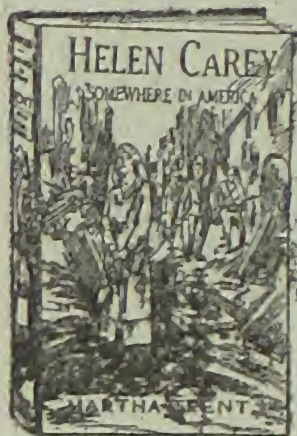
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